

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. An automatic call distribution system for transferring information between customers and agents, the automatic call distribution system comprising:
 - a network interface for transferring information between customers and agents through a computer network; and
 - a control system for simultaneously assigning a plurality of customers to a single agent through one or more of the interfaces.
2. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, further comprising a reconnection mechanism for reconnecting a customer previously assigned to a given agent back to the given agent after there has been an inadvertent disconnect.
3. An automatic call distribution system for transferring information between customers and agents, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a "call" is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:
 - a control system for assigning a call to a given line based upon the status of the given line, wherein the status of a line is one of the following states: (1) the line is available to receive a call, (2) the line is unavailable because the line is disconnected, (3) the line is unavailable because the line is presently handling a call, or (4) the line is unavailable because a call on the line has recently been completed and additional processing with respect to the completed call is being performed.
4. An automatic call distribution system for transferring information between customers and agents, comprising
 - a selection control responsive to a customer's selection to indicate a preferred mode of communication.
5. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is online chat.

6. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is by web page communication.

7. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is packet voice.

8. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is telephone.

9. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is video conferencing.

10. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is application sharing.

11. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication whiteboarding.

12. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is email.

13. The automatic call distribution system of claim 4, wherein the indicated preferred mode of communication is voice mail.

14. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a “call” is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for assigning a call to a given line based upon a criterion for giving priority to predetermined customers.

15. An automatic call distribution system, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a “call” is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for assigning a call to a given agent based upon a criterion reflecting the given agent's ability to handle calls.

16. An automatic call distribution system, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a "call" is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for assigning a call to a given agent based upon historical customer data.

17. An automatic call distribution system, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a "call" is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for assigning a call to a given agent based upon the call's current session data.

18. An automatic call distribution system, wherein calls are assigned to agents communicating with a caller via different communication types, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for assigning a call to an agent based upon the agent's ability to handle calls according to communication type.

19. An automatic call distribution system, wherein calls are assigned to lines of different communication types, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for prioritizing calls according to communication type.

20. An automatic call distribution system, wherein calls are assigned to lines of different communication types, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a control system for prioritizing calls according to a predetermined customer rating.

21. An automatic call distribution system, wherein calls are assigned to lines of different communication types, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a browser database allowing a customer to view web pages;

an agent computer system for communicating with a customer; and

a control system for assigning a call to the agent computer system by taking into account which web pages the customer has viewed.

22. The automatic call distribution system of claim 18, further comprising:
a database having records of agent efficiency with respect to two or more communication types; and
the control system including a process for using the database information to assign a call to an agent.

23. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a "call" is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:
a control system for assigning a call to a given agent based upon a criterion including the number of available lines allocated to an agent divided by the number of total lines allocated to the given agent.

24. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, further comprising:
a performance tracker for tracking an agent's performance with respect to handling telephone and network calls.

25. The automatic call distribution system of claim 24, wherein the performance tracker also takes into account whether the agent had multiple lines allocated to the agent.

26. The automatic call distribution system of claim 24, wherein the performance tracker tracks the performance of a team of two or more agents.

27. The automatic call distribution system of claim 24, wherein tracking is performed with respect to specific tasks.

28. An automatic call distribution system comprising:
a server computer for providing communications between a customer computer and to an agent computer, wherein the server computer includes records that keep track of the communications;

a failure handler for placing the agent and customer computers in direct communication upon failure of the server computer.

29. The automatic call distribution system of claim 28, further comprising:
 - a database for storing information on communications between the customer computer and the agent computer during direct communication between the agent and customer computers; and
 - a data synchronizer for using the stored information in the database to update the server system so that when server computer communications are resumed the server system maintains continuity of its records.

30. An automatic call distribution system for transferring information between customers and agents, wherein information is transferred via a communication line, wherein a "call" is a request that a customer be placed in communication with an agent, the automatic call distribution system comprising:

a transfer system for allowing a first agent to transfer a call to a second agent, wherein the transfer system provides for transferring information collected during a customer's session with the first agent, to the second agent.

31. The automatic call distribution system of claim 18, further comprising:
 - a mixed communication interface allowing the agent to transfer information with the customer through both the telephone and network interfaces during a single session.

32. The automatic call distribution system of claim 31, wherein the agent transfers Hyper-Text Markup Language format text embedded within online chat text.

33. The automatic call distribution system of claim 32, wherein the agent transfers a Uniform Resource Locator embedded within online chat text.

34. The automatic call distribution system of claim 31, wherein the customer uses a computer and telephone to communicate with an agent, wherein the agent initiates a Web page transmission of information to the customer's computer concurrently with speaking to the customer over the telephone.

35. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, further comprising:
a shuffling mechanism for assigning agents to telephone interface or the network interface information transfers.
36. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, wherein an agent operates an agent computer system, wherein the agent computer system includes a processor, storage device, user input device and a display, wherein the agent computer system is coupled to the control system, the automatic call distribution system further comprising:
an agent interface providing a control to allow an agent using the interface to specify how many communication lines are allocated to the agent.
37. The automatic call distribution system of claim 36, wherein the control includes a button to increase the number of lines allocated to the agent.
38. The automatic call distribution system of claim 36, wherein the control includes a button to decrease the number of lines allocated to the agent.
39. An automatic call distribution system, comprising
an agent computer system operated by a human agent for communication with a customer;
an agent interface providing a selection of predefined data that the agent can select for presentation to the customer.
40. The automatic call distribution system of claim 39, wherein the agent interface includes
a process for causing the display of a predefined text section that the agent can transfer to the customer.
41. The automatic call distribution system of claim 39, wherein the agent interface includes
a process for causing the display of a Uniform Resource Locator (URL) that the agent can provide to the customer.

42. The automatic call distribution system of claim 1, wherein an agent operates an agent computer system, wherein the agent computer system includes a processor, storage device, user input device and a display, wherein the agent computer system is coupled to the control system, the automatic call distribution system further comprising:

an agent interface providing a “wrap” button that the agent can activate when a call is completed so that the amount of time the agent spends in post-call work can be recorded.

43. An automatic call distribution system, comprising:

an agent computer allowing an agent to communicate with a customer;
a database coupled to the agent computer; and
an agent interface allowing entry of a question/answer pair into the database, wherein the question/answer pair entry is derived from information obtained in communications with the customer.

44. An agent interface for an agent in a call center, wherein the call center places a customer in communication with the agent, the interface comprising

a first indicator for indicating that a first customer is not waiting for a response from the agent; and
a second indicator for indicating that a second customer is waiting for a response from the agent.

45. The agent interface of claim 44, wherein the first indicator is a first color and the second indicator is a second color.

46. The agent interface of claim 45, further comprising

a third indicator for indicating that a customer has been waiting for an agent response for more than a predetermined period of time.

47. An agent interface for an agent in a call center, wherein the call center places a customer in communication with the agent, the interface comprising

an indicator for indicating the status of the customer, wherein the indicator is in a first state after the customer receives a response from the agent, wherein the indicator is in a second state after the customer sends a communication to the agent, and wherein the

indicator is in a third state after a predetermined period of time elapses since the customer has sent a communication to the agent.

48. The agent interface of claim 47, wherein different colors are used to represent different states of the indicator.

49. The agent interface of claim 47, wherein different states are represented by audible means.

50. The agent interface of claim 48, wherein the first state is represented by the color green, wherein the second state is represented by the color yellow, and wherin the third state is represented by the color red.